

MTB World Championships – CM

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By Rob Jones in Livigno www.cyclingnews.com

August 25: Four-cross

Kintner returns for gold; Prokop claims men's title

It is quite clear that Kiwis are gravity fans, with an estimated 7,000 showing up to watch the 4-Cross competition. The organization had done a tremendous amount of work on the course, carving it out of the side of Mount Ngongotaha. The weather also proved to be extremely cooperative, with blue skies and sunshine making the event the first of the week which could be watched comfortably without a jacket.

Both Michal Prokop (Czech Republic) and Jill Kintner (USA) were able to progress without too much difficulty, riding off the front in each heat and not having to struggle.

However, the story behind was one of crashes and collisions, with some favoured riders exiting early as a result. Cedric Gracia (France) was the first to go, in the opening round, when he and Hayden Lee (New Zealand) tangled in the banked turn after the third straight away. Gracia finished off his run with a crowd pleasing run up high on the Red Bull Wall, proving once again that he is the consummate entertainer.



Jill Kintner
Photo: Mike Heydon

That turn at the end of the third straight proved to be a problem for a number of riders, as riders behind tried to cut low and up in front of ones in ahead of them - sometimes unsuccessfully. Guido Tschugg (Germany) and Dan Atherton went down here in the men's Final as Tschugg came up. Tschugg managed to get up and finish ahead of Atherton for bronze, but could easily have been disqualified.

Defending world champion Brian Lopes (USA) also crashed out in the semifinals, disappointing fans who were hoping to see World Cup leader Prokop and Lopes go head to head in the Final. Lopes blamed Michal Marosi (Czech Republic) for his early exit.



Michal Prokop does his thing.
Photo: Mikkeli Godfree

"I didn't get the greatest start really, but. You know that's just my fault. Roger (Rinderknecht - Switzerland) got a good start and we were going into the first turn. I didn't want to slam him, so I just let him go. I slotted in behind him and coming into the second turn I was behind him again. He kind of squared up a bit to get the inside line but I went in as far as I could...you know, that's the only way to pass and f***ing Marosi...I think he just jumped and just ploughed right into me. It was exactly what I knew could happen on this course. It doesn't make for too clean a pass."

Lopes skipped the small final for fifth through eighth ("For fifth? No, I don't care about fifth"), which was won by Joost Wichman (Netherlands).

The small women's field of nine riders featured only two rounds of racing, with Kintner and Jana Horakova (Czech Republic) advancing in one heat, and Anneke Beerten (Netherlands) and Anita Molcik (Austria) in the other. Tara Llanes (USA), the bronze medalist last year, crashed.

Kintner easily took the final, followed by Beerten. Horakova looked to have the bronze medal locked up until she misjudged a corner halfway down the course and crashed out of contention, opening the door for Molcik. Joey Gough (Great Britain) took the small final for fifth.

Kintner was pleased with her win. "Yeah, this is amazing. I was looking down at the start and I was thinking, 'I'm so happy to be here in this amazing place and the sun's out. I just had fun out there today. In the final I got a little bit squirrely on one of the jumps on the third straight and I thought I was going to throw it away, but start to finish I was feeling really strong. I felt like I had all the pieces and I just had to put them together. I'm so happy.'"

The men's final saw Prokop well out in front, with Rinderknecht comfortably in second. Tschugg and Atherton had their aforementioned tangle at the rear, with Tschugg claiming the bronze.

Atherton shrugged off the incident. "The final was pretty dirty. Everyone wanted it. Crashes everywhere. I was behind Lopes (in the semifinal) and whoever took him out, and I just slipped past them and took the opportunity. It was like that all day. That's the World's though, everyone's just so hungry."

Prokop, on the other hand, was one rider who was pleased with the course. "The course was good, I liked it. It had everything; maybe a couple of the jumps were too short on the third straight, but it was a good track for me."

He also commented on rival Brian Lopes not being in the Final. "I think that if he was in the final it would have been more challenging, but that's racing. Last year I crashed (breaking his leg) and he won. This year he crashed and I won. But I'm pretty happy with how this year has gone - I've won almost everything; the World Cup and now the world title."

Race Notes

Brian Lopes waxed eloquent after his early exit:



Brian Lopes
Photo: Mikkeli Godfree

On the course: "It's not really that big. The biggest jump here is probably the table-top here at the end and it's about 30 feet. It's not really far at all for how fast we're going. The takeoffs are huge but the jumps aren't far enough. You really have to slow down for the jumps. It's probably too big for some people, but it's not because they are too big, it's because they're not built right. You shouldn't build jumps that are only 20 feet apart when you're going 35 miles an hour into them, they need to be 50 feet with a nice big safety-case. The only danger is how fast you hit them."

On defending his title: "I'm not too happy really, again. The start in that last race wasn't that great and again I can only blame that on myself. Other than that I was feeling good. My speed was pretty good on the track but again, from the start in knew anything could happen on this course - there's like three turns that someone could take you out on and ruin your day if they want to and that's what Marosi wanted to do to me so I'll chalk him up as another one I'll pay back, just as Guido Tschugg is on my list to pay back. At this point in my career, I'm all done having fun and if I don't win another World Cup or another World Championship it's not going to tarnish what I've done in the past so if they want to play dirty then hey, I can play dirty too."



Marosi tries to cut in on Lopes
Photo: Mikkeli Godfree

Local hope John Kirkcaldie exited in the first round. "Firstly there was a bit of bumping in the first turn where I managed to get ahead but went into the second turn in second. Into it I went pretty tight but Rich [Houseman] came bombing up the inside and just blew me out of the way. We didn't crash but we both came to a stop. I just went nuts from there - I've never ridden so fast. I put in a hell of a pass on Rich. From there I knew I could get the last guy but as I went into the berm he swung out and hit me. He pushed me into the poles on the exit. Eventually they DQ-ed me for that and I can't protest so I'll just keep my mouth shut and worry about tomorrow." [JK was not DQ-ed for this, it was for missing a gate at the top of the course.]

Results

<div>Women Final 1 Jill Kintner (USA) 2 Anneke Beerten (Netherlands) 3 Anita Molcik (Austria) 4 Jana Horakova (Czech Republic) Small Final 5 Joey Gough (Great Britain) 6 Melissa Buhl (USA) 7 Tara Llanes (USA) 8 Jessica Vogt (USA) 9 Diana Marggraff (Ecuador) Qualifications DNS Katrina Miller (Australia) DNS Fionn Griffiths (Great Britain) DNS Sabrina Jonnier (France) DNS Tracey Hannah (Australia) DNS Mio Suemasa (Japan) DNS Renee Junga (Australia) DNS Celine Gros (France)</div>	<div>Men Final 1 Michal Prokop (Czech Republic) 2 Roger Rinderknecht (Switzerland) 3 Guido Tschugg (Germany) 4 Dan Atherton (Great Britain) Small Final 5 Joost Wichman (Netherlands) 6 Will Longden (Great Britain) 7 Michal Marosi (Czech Republic) 8 Brian Lopes (USA) 1/4 Finals 9 Jurg Meijer (Netherlands) 10 Gee Atherton (Great Britain) 11 Mickael Deldycke (France) 12 Kamil Tatarkovic (Czech Republic) 13 Lars Sternberg (USA) 14 Cody Warren (USA) 15 Alex Lloyd (Australia) 16 Daniel Auerswald (Germany) 1/8 Finals 17 Cedric Gracia (France) 18 Filip Polc (Slovakia) 19 John Kirkcaldie (New Zealand) 20 Amiel Cavalier (Australia) 21 Lukas Tamme (Czech Republic) 22 Richard Houseman (USA) 23 Jared Rando (Australia) 24 Tom Holland (New Zealand) 25 Reon Boe (New Zealand) 26 Cameron Cole (New Zealand) 27 Craig Pattle (New Zealand) 28 Luke Strom (Australia) 29 Hayden Lee (New Zealand) 30 Sascha Meyenborg (Germany) 31 Wyn Masters (New Zealand) 32 Mike Haderer (USA) Qualifications 33 Yuta Kurise (Japan) 34 Rafael Alvarez De Lara Lu (Spain) 35 Eric Carter (USA) 36 Scott Geater (New Zealand) DNS Michael Hannah (Australia) DNS Wade Bootes (Australia) DNS Luis Lancellotti (Brazil) DNS Markolf Berchtold (Brazil) DNS Nathaniel Giacomozzi (Brazil)</div>
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